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Identical letters dated 1 February 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, and further to our previous letters regarding the Turkish regime's continued violations of the principles of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, its attacks against the sovereignty and territorial unity and integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, its open support for terrorism and its threat to regional and international peace and security, as well as the failure of the Security Council to fulfil its responsibility to put an end to the Turkish regime's attacks and crimes and to hold it accountable, and in response to the letter from the representative of the Turkish regime dated 20 January 2018 (S/2018/53), I should like to convey to you the following information:

The Turkish regime continues to spread lies that no longer convince anyone. It is attempting to justify its military attacks against the Syrian Arab Republic on the basis of the concept of self-defence as set forth in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. That is the same basis on which the so-called "international coalition" led by the United States has justified the appalling crimes it has perpetrated in Syria against innocent civilians.

The reluctance of the Security Council to carry out its duty to prevent the attacks being launched by the so-called "international coalition" led by the United States of America against the Syrian Arab Republic under the pretext of self-defence as provided for in Article 51 of the Charter, and its failure to put an end to the abuse of that article as a pretext for violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity and unity of States, have allowed the Turkish regime to use that same pretext for launching a new attack against the Syrian Arab Republic. Despite the claims being purveyed by both the international coalition and the Turkish regime, Article 51 of the Charter and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice handed down on 9 July 2004 in the matter of the separation wall built by the Israeli occupation authorities in occupied Palestinian territory both make clear that the type of attack that gives a State the right of self-defence must come from another State, not from individuals or terrorist organizations.

The Syrian Arab Republic also rejects the attempt by the Turkish regime's letter to rely on Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005), 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014). None of those resolutions give Member States the right to violate the sovereignty of other States and launch military operations against their territories on the pretext of combating terrorism. On the contrary, resolution 2178 (2014) provides that international cooperation and any measures taken by Member States to prevent

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and combat terrorism must comply fully with the Charter of the United Nations. It is ironic that the Turkish regime should attempt to justify its military aggression on the basis of resolutions 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014) when, instead of complying with those two resolutions, it is systematically violating their provisions. In particular, it is violating paragraphs 8, 10, 11, 14 and 16 of resolution 2170 (2014) and paragraphs 2, 3, 4 and 5 of resolution 2178 (2014) by providing all manner of support for terrorists and allowing tens of thousands of foreign terrorist fighters to cross from Turkish territory into Syria, as has been acknowledged by the head of the Turkish regime.

The Turkish military operation in northern Syria constitutes a flagrant attack against the territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic and a violation of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. In particular, it violates paragraph 4 of Article 2, which provides that all States shall refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations. The Turkish aggression has led to the deaths and injuries of hundreds of civilians, most of them women and children. It has also displaced tens of thousands of Syrians from their homes, particularly in the city of Afrin and surrounding villages, and destroyed infrastructure and cultural and historical property, including the archaeological remains of the Ayn Darah temple in the northern Aleppo countryside, which date back to the first millennium B.C.

The Turkish regime's claim that it is committed to a political solution in Syria does not correspond to reality. That regime has supported terrorism in Syria relentlessly and attempted to undermine any political effort aimed at sparing the blood of the Syrian people. Similarly, the regime's claim that it is committed to the territorial integrity and political unity of Syria and is undertaking its "military operation" with a view to contributing to and furthering those political principles is specious. Turkey has merely replaced Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) with other terrorist groups. It is carrying out attacks and perpetrating massacres against civilian inhabitants and destroying infrastructure, services facilities and even archaeological sites. It has unrelentingly violated Syrian sovereignty by continuing to appropriate Syrian territory and build fortifications and separation walls therein. That is not to mention the theft of relics and public and private property.

The Syrian Arab Republic stresses that the presence of any foreign military forces on its territory without its express consent constitutes aggression and occupation, and will be treated as such. In that regard, it calls on the Turkish regime to cease its military aggression against the Syrian Arab Republic, withdraw its military forces from inside Syria and halt its support for terrorist organizations and its policies of violating the unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. The Syrian Arab Republic reiterates that all of the Turkish regime's attacks and actions targeting the sovereignty and territorial unity of the Syrian Arab Republic and its occupation of Syrian territory will not alter the legal status of that territory or the fact that it belongs to the Syrian Arab Republic, and will not result in any way in the curtailment or denial of the legal sovereign rights of the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Syrian Arab Republic calls on the Security Council not to allow any State to use force in a manner contrary to international law or to use the Charter of the United Nations as a pretext for acts of aggression. The Charter should not be held hostage by such States and interpreted in accordance with narrow interests that are at odds with the letter and spirit of the Charter. It should be noted that the representatives of the United States, Britain and France at the United Nations, who weep loudly and hypocritically on behalf of Syrian civilians, have not uttered a single word about the Turkish crimes in Afrin.

The Syrian Arab Republic once again calls on the Security Council to fulfil its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security by putting an end to the Turkish regime's attacks against the sovereignty and territorial unity and integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic and that regime's support for terrorism, and to hold it accountable.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mounzer **Mounzer**
Minister Plenipotentiary
Chargé d'affaires a.i.